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Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement to support French and Aboriginal languages

YELLOWKNIFE, MARCH 14, 1995 The Governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories have signed a renewed Cooperation Agreement to support and strengthen French and Aboriginal languages in the N.W.T.

The three-year accord was announced today by Ethel Blondin-Andrew, MP for Western Arctic, on behalf of Canadian Heritage Minister, the Honourable Michel Dupuy, and the Honourable Nellie Courmoyea, Premier of the N.W.T., during a special ceremony at the Legislative Building in Yellowknife.

The Agreement will enable the Government of the Northwest Territories to continue to provide French language services and programs to its francophone community and to support initiatives that revitalize, maintain and enhance Aboriginal languages.

"This agreement will allow Francophone and Aboriginal communities to undertake priority projects which address their needs. It illustrates the firm and significant commitment of the federal government to the development of these communities in the tradition of Canada's respect for the rich and diverse heritage of its people," said Canadian Heritage Minister Michel Dupuy.

"The accord reflects our cultural and linguistic diversity," noted Mrs. Courmoyea. "This partnership recognizes and supports that diversity and contributes to the vitality of the languages of the N.W.T."

"The Cooperation Agreement and the Parks Canada funding will help support Aboriginal people to the development of their language and culture. The Cooperation Agreement also illustrates the commitment of both governments to French as an official language of the N.W.T.," said Mrs. Blondin-Andrew.

The Official Languages Act of the Northwest Territories recognized Chipewyan, Cree, Dogrib, English, French, Gwich'in, Inuktitut, (including Inuvialuktun and Inuinnaqtun) and Slavey (including North and South Slavey) as official languages with equal status and protection under the Act. The N.W.T. is the only jurisdiction in Canada that recognizes aboriginal languages as official languages.

The Canada-Northwest Territories Cooperation Agreement provides funding of \$18 million for a variety of programs and services. These include delivery of territorial government services in all official languages, support to francophone community and cultural development projects and French and Aboriginal broadcasting, provision of health education services and promotional material in French and Aboriginal languages and translation and interpretation services for the Courts and the Legislative Assembly.

Apart from the Cooperation Agreement, the Department of Canadian Heritage, through its Parks Canada sector, will provide \$2 million for initiatives which support Aboriginal culture.

The Parks Canada funding will support community-based initiatives in the N.W.T. which recognize the contribution of Aboriginal culture to the Canadian identity. Projects include community management plans for developing new and existing National Historic Sites, the Aboriginal History Place Name project, cultural knowledge documentation and oral history.

Funding for this project was provided for in the February 1995 federal budget and is therefore built into the existing fiscal framework. This initiative is an example of how this government is prioritizing its spending so that it can better serve Canadians by making efficient use of their tax dollars.

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